Central American NEWSLETTER

Newsletter of the Central American Group of the Spanish Main Society.
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Vol III, No.41 October 1990

EDITORIAL

Welcome to volume III. Time to put the lawn mower away and get out the stamps again! I do find summer interferes with my collecting!

The season opens for the Spanish Main with something different this time. Richard Saundry is organising a meeting at the Victory Services Club, for 15 September, and the theme of the meeting will be "Modern Philately". Already promised are displays from several South and Central American countries and more are being solicited. I cannot recall anything being arranged along these lines before so it will be an original and entertaining day.

Following the recent International Exhibition here in England we would like to extend our Congratulations to those members who exhibited. On a personal note I went straight to, and greatly enjoyed, Kilian Nathan's display of early Nicaragua in the FIP Championship Class which was awarded a Large Gold. There were many other superb exhibits outside my sphere of expertise; the Large Gold awarded to L Wallace Dean III for his Haiti to 1881 was well deserved, and I greatly enjoyed his exhibit. Henry Madden received a Large Vermeil, Cornelius Hooghius and Derek Pocock were awarded Large Silvers and Derek Palmer a Silver Bronze. Congratulations to them all. The small number of our members who were able to exhibit at London 1990 was due to the limited number of frames available, and whilst the organisers concentrated on quality, several of our members were unable to get a frame allocation.

Several members interested in postal rates in Nicaragua are pooling their resources to form a study group and hopefully the results of their labours will be available soon. Those members interested in receiving details of the Study Group's conclusions should forward £1 or $2 (in GB stamps, sterling cheque or US bills) to your Editor at the address above. It is hoped that at some date in the future these researches will form the basis of an article for our Newsletter.

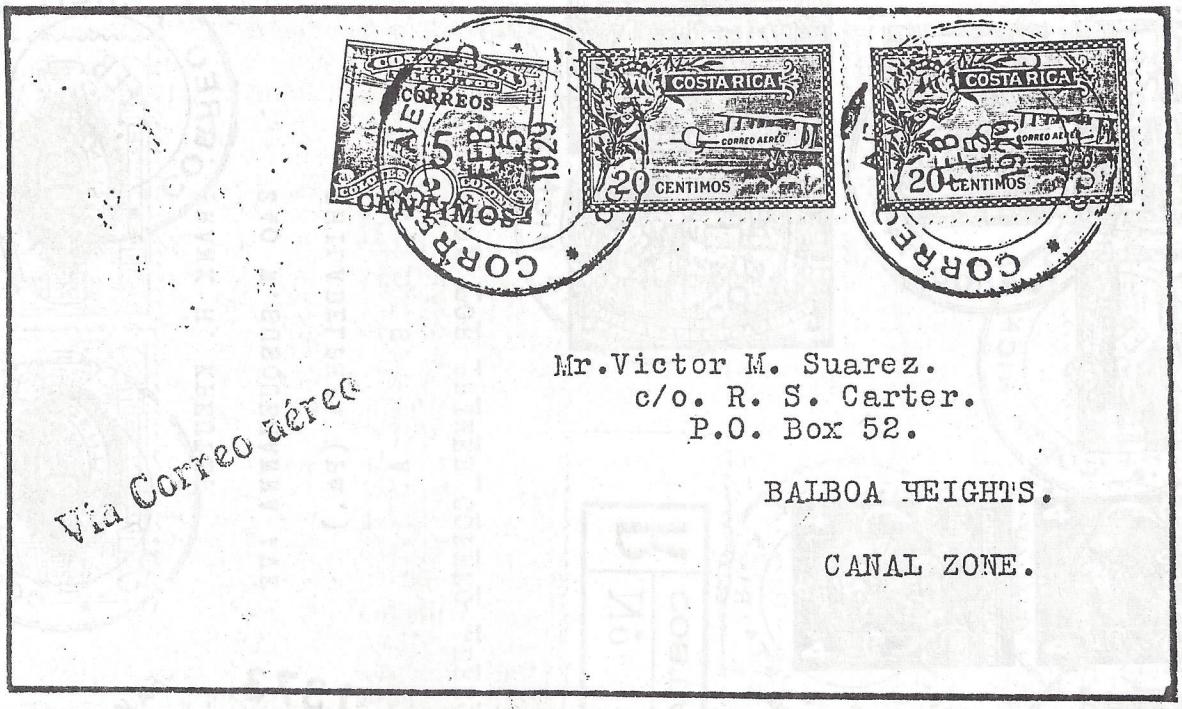
mpb

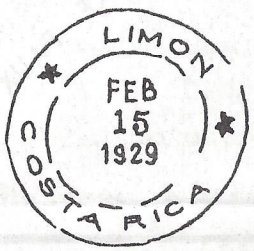
THE COSTA RICAN AIR MAIL SERVICE OF 1929 by RICHARD H SAUNDRY

Every serious student of the philately of Costa Rica will know that 11 March 1930 saw the inauguration of the first regular airmail service from Costa Rica on U.S. FAM Route 5 to Miami via Guatemala and Havana, and Route 8 to Brownsville, Texas via El Salvador and Mixico. All Costa Rican airmail services that precede that date were experimental in nature, or were introduced transiently as an emergency measure to overcome problems of disrupted communications caused by winter flooding of the principal railway service between San Jose and Limon. In issue 13 of the Central American Newsletter (September 1983) pp2-6, I set out at length some of the problems I had in interpreting airmail covers of the November/December 1928 period when Costa Rica sought aid from the USA to provide militery air services between San Jose and Limon owing to the extensive flooding of the Atlantic coastal region. Various readers kindly sent me information which belatedly I intend to submit as a comprehensive article for some future edition of our Newsletter. Nevertheless despite all the help afforded me there are a number of pieces to the jigsaw that are still missing. What I would like from the present readership is that they would carefully check their holdings of early Costa Rican airmail covers and let me have the details of any covers that they have that are dated January to March 1929. It is quite likely that such information will prove critical in confirming or destroying a pet theory that I have, that a regular weekly service between these two Costa Rican towns for which a special airmail fee was charged. The evidence for this I now set out for you to judge:-

Briefly we know that on Christmas Eve 1928 the US military fliers returned to Nicaragua for the festive season and did not return to Costa Rica until probably 2 January 1929. Meanwhile the United Fruit Company had brought a plane from Tela, Honduras (probably 7/8 January) and operated a service between San Jose and Limon. It was reported by Mr Whiting, the Pan-American agent that the existing planes were inadequate for the San Jose-Limon route and as a result a five seater Loening monoplane (No 9726) belonging to Pan Am was brought in (3 February?). What we do not have is documentary evidence for any airmail service and if so how long it operated? What was the frequency of the flights? What was the airmail fee? I now wish to report on four airmail covers which I have found for the February to March 1929 period, and with this very limited material set forth my theory for this service which I will be only too pleased to see shot down by additional evidence provided by you, the interested reader. The four covers that I have are:-

Cover A Envelope addressed to the Canal Zone bearing the straight line cachet (rubber handstamp?) in violet "Via Correo Aereo" plus two copies of the 20 centimos stamp (SG 164, Scott C1) plus the 5 centimos postally overprinted





backstamp

San Jose to the Canal Zone via Limon
15 February 1929

telegraph stamp (SG 171, Scott 149) giving a total franking of 45 centimos. The adhesives are cancelled with two clear strikes of the double-ring CORREO AEREO date stamp (used in San Jose) of 15 February 1929, and on the back is a single strike of the Limon double-ring transit date stamp, also of 15 February 1929. A previous owner of this cover has written on the back in pencil "ler Vuelo por Los Aviones Militares". No arrival date stamp in the Canal Zone.

Cover B On next page. A "fake" Registered cover from San Jose to Philadelphia. This cover bears adhesives to the value of ¢1.05 cancelled with the double-ring Correo Aereo date stamp 22 February 1929. On the back are transit date stamps for New York 3 March, and arrival registry date stamps of Philadelphia for 4 March. This cover bears the type-written legend "via Limon por primer correo aereo" in red type and was sent by R E Roig V - Apartado 523, San Jose. There is a Costa Rican registry label No.6796D. Unfortunately a previous owner of this cover (Mr Paulsen Bailey) has judged this cover a fake and has disfigured it both on the front and the back with "FAKE-FAUX" hand stamps, and endorsed it as a fake by signing it and adding "Fake as being a first flight of any kind". I would endorse these comments that it is undoubtedly not a first flight cover.

R. E. ROIG V.-APARTADO 523-
SAN JOSÉ-COSTA RICA-

FRANK H. KREUTER

240 W. SUSQUEHANNA AVE.

PHILADELPHIA (Pa.)

U. S. A.

""VIA LIMÓN POR PRIMER CORREO AEREO""

-FAKE—FAUX-

1373

R Nº 6796 D
COSTA RICA

-FAKE—FAUX-

#225

Nevertheless it is in my estimation a genuine flown registered cover and all the postal markings, the registration label and the coffee propaganda label are correct. I think that it is a great shame that an expert should disfigure a philatelic item in this way as it no longer looks a display item whereas a marking on the back would have sufficed to alert a prospective future buyer as to the possibility that it may not be all.that it purported to be.

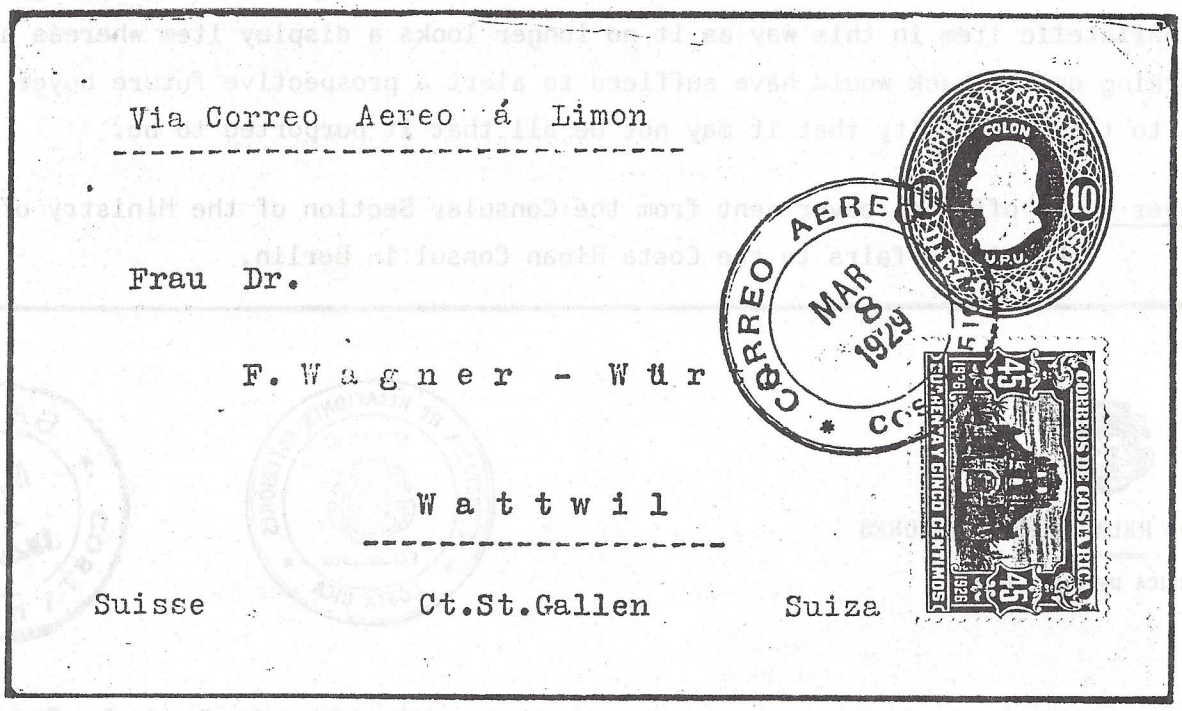
Cover C An official cover sent from the Consular Section of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Costa Rican Consul in Berlin.

backstamp

The four official adhesives amounting to a total franking of 20 centimos (the correct foreign letter rate) were pre-cancelled as was the custom at that time, with undated double-ring postmarks, but the front of the cover bears a date stamp of 1 March 1929. On the back is a clear strike of the double-ring "Correo Aereo" date stamp for 1 March 1929.

Cover D On next page. This is a 10 centimos postal stationery envelope (H&G 10) with an added 45 centimos adhesive (SG 168, Scott 146) giving a total franking of 55 centimos, sent to St Gallen, Switzerland. Both the embossed and the adhesive stamps are cancelled with a clear strike of the "Correo Aereo" date stamp of 8 March 1929.

There are no transit or receipt postmarks. In addition there is typed across the top of the front of the envelope "Via Correo Aereo á Limon".



Example of a commercially used 1929 flood flight letter to Europe
San Jose to Switzerland 8 March 1929

The information that I infer from these four covers:-

(1) That a regular airmail service operated between San Jose and Limon from at least 15 February to 8 March 1929. (Can anyone extend these dates?)

(2) Is it coincidence that all four covers were dated at exactly one week apart from each other? Was this airmail service available once a week? (Can anyone find airmail covers fro dates that do not accord with a possible weekly service?) Furthermore all four covers were sent from San Jose to Limon. Does anyone have covers sent in the reverse direction?

(3) Was there a special supplementary airmail fee? Until 1930 Costa Rica did not have any special airmail rates that we know of. Letter rates were 20 centimos to foreign (UPU) countries plus 25 centimos for registration. Domestic letters were charged at 10 centimos, which under the terms of the Pan-American Postal Union was also charged for mail to American destinations, including the USA. I therefore suggest that a special airmail fee was levied for this short-lived airmail service, probably 35 centimos per 10 grams. This clearly accords with the frankings on covers A and D. Thus in the case of the letter to the Canal Zone franked at 45 centimos we deduct the 10 centimos for the domestic letter rate leaving a balance of 35 centimos; and the same logic applied to the letter sent to Switzerland allows deduction of 20 centimos foreign letter rate from the

total franking of 55 centimos to give the same answer of 35 centimos. The evidence from the official letter (Cover C) rated at 20 centimos does in no way undermine this argument since the only franking that needed to be shown was the 20 centimos in adhesives to convince foreign postal administrations that the foreign letter rate had been correctly pre-paid. It is quite logical and quite correct to assume that an internal airmail service sponsored and operated upon he request of the Costa Rican government should not charge for governmental official mail. Last we come to the "fake" registered cover. I would suggest that this franking is correct and not philatelic in nature. Indeed since it is of such an unusual franking it is inconceivable that a faker would choose adhesives to the value of ¢1.05, when if he wanted to fool a collector he would have chosen adhesives amounting to a more expected tariff. If we subtract 35 centimos to allow for the letter rate of 10 centimos plus 25 centimos registry we are left with 70 centimos which is exactly right for a double-weight airmail surcharge. I emphasis that I do acknowledge that the authenticity of Cover B is in doubt, but I feel that it is O.K..

To summarise, therefore, I conclude that a short-lived weekly airmail service was offered in the early part of 1929 between San Jose and Limon, that it was probably organised for the Costa Rican government by Pan American Airways Inc., and that a special supplementary airmail fee was levied of 35 centimos per 10 or 20 grams. If anyone has a similar type of cover please let us know about it! Notwithstanding my deductions which could be way off the mark, any genuine airmail covers of this period must be rare!

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CHINANDEGA POSTMARKS ON NICARAGUAN POSTAL CARDS

by MICHAEL SCHREIBER

A peculiar characteristic of Chinandega, Nicaragua, point-of-origin cancels on Nicaraguan postal cards is that the cancels usually are struck on the left side of the cards. The phenomenon is more amusing than important, yet I think it deserves dome consideration.

NOV 27 1890
REPUBLICA DE NICARAGUA
TARJETA POSTAL
PARA EL INTERIOR.
U.P.U. 1890.
NICARAGUA
2 CENTAVOS 2
CORREOS DE NICARAGUA
Nota: Escribase la direccion solamente en este lado, y el mensaje en el otro.
Hamilton Bank Note Co. New York

A cancellation of Chinandega struck on the left side of the card.

The strikes occur on the left-side of postal cards regardless of whether the imprinted stamps are in the upper-centre of the design or in the conventional upper-right corner. No other Nicaraguan city or town cancels appear on the left as an origination marking with the consistency and frequency of those from Chinandega.

Below are two lists of Chinandega cancellations on postal cards or envelopes in my collection. The listed 1891 Chinandega receiving postmark is on the front of the postal card. I would expect that Chinandega receiving postmarks also appear on the back of cards, although I have never seen one there.

As the lists show, the Chinandega origin cancels are struck on the left front side of the postal cards, at least for cards used between 1887 and 1895. In contrast, Chinandega cancels on envelopes used during the same period are in the upper-right corners and usually cancel the imprinted stamps.

Postal Cards

year of use	card and denomination	origin	destination	location of Chinandega cancel
1887	1878 2c	Chinandega	Leon	upper left
1888	1888 2c	Chinandega	Leon	upper left
1889	1888 2c	Chinandega	Leon	upper left
1890	1890 2c	Chinandega	Corinto	*
1890	1890 2c	Chinandega	Leon	upper left
1891	1891 2c	Chinandega	Corinto	lower left
1891	1891 2c	Managua	Chinandega	lower left
1891	1891 2c	Chinandega	Leon	lower left
1893	1893 2c	Chinandega	Corinto	lower left
1893	1893 2c	Chinandega	Corinto	lower left
1895	1895 2c	Chinandega	Managua	upper left
1904	1904 2c on 6c (H&G 55c)	Chinandega	Corinto	upper right

Envelopes

1890	1890 5c	Chinandega	Leon	upper right
1891	1891 5c	Chinandega	Managua	upper right
1893	1893 5c	Chinandega	Leon	upper right

*No origin cancel. Corinto receiving cancel is at upper right.

Why are postal cards cancelled on the left so consistently during the 1887-95 period? My guess is that the Chinandega postmaster from the late 1880's through to the mid 1890's was left handed and naturally favoured the left side for his strikes.

Desire Pector's study of the Nicaraguan economy of the early 1890's gives Chinandega's population then as 18,000. The town was a terminus of the railway line opened in January 1881 from Corinto and was on the longer line operating since November 1882 between Corinto and towns and cities as far as Leon. A post office serving a population of Chinandega's size probably had at least one clerk in addition to the postmaster, although much of the population was illiterate and would have had little use for a postal system.

The person in Chinandega cancelling the postal cards likely saw the beautiful, fancy designs, including the imprinted stamps and borders, as single units. A cancel anywhere would document dispatch or receipt. Reuse of uncancelled cut-outs from postal cards was probably a minor problem compared to the re-use of envelope cut-outs. Any cancel wherever the hand fell would suffice to mark a postal card, unless the clerk deliberately struck the card's imprinted stamp, normally in the upper right corner.

Envelopes cancelled in Chinandega, however, seem to be another matter. Their only design was the imprinted stamp in the upper-right corner, and any clerk, left or right handed, would naturally try to hit the imprinted stamp with his canceller.

Do any of our study group's members have a Nicaragua postal card from Chinandega used between 1885 and 1895 or so with the Chinandega postmark in the upper right corner or on the right hand side of the front? If so, a photocopy of it to the editor would be much appreciated.

Can anyone show other Nicaraguan postal cards from Chinandega with cancels on the left, especially any from 1896-1900? Does anyone have postal cards to Chinandega with the receiving postmarks on the back? Can anyone with Chinandega locally used postal cards say where their postmarks appear? Does anyone have an envelope with the origin cancel on the left hand side? Finally can anyone show postal card cut-outs used as added frankings?

HONDURAS: 1877 PROVISIONALS - A RECENT ACQUISITION

by RICHARD WASHBURN

Introduction

The 1877 handstamped surcharges of Honduras (SG 13, 19 and 30 (3); Scott 3, 6, 7, 13, 23 and 24 (6)) accord with the official instructions that appear in the "Guia Postal de Honduras" printed in April, 1877, in Comayagua (Tipografia Nacional - Calle del Telégrafo) pp 5 & 6. The decree authorising the surcharges is dated 13 March 1877.

These provisionals are still as baffling to most philatelists today as they were when issued 113 years ago. The why/wherefore of the two types of surcharge, the exact quantities issued and the reason for some seventeen to nineteen varieties, errors or trial printings still listed by most catalogues are still a mystery.

The first issue surcharges were valid for use from April 1877, through to July 1878, when the "Morazan" definitive issue arrived from New York. In use for some fifteen months, in an isolated country with scant correspondence within, and even fewer letters sent abroad, no wonder genuinely used copies of these stamps are scarce. No covers have been recorded as yet. There are, however, four "on piece" items that I have seen, and one of these prompted this article.

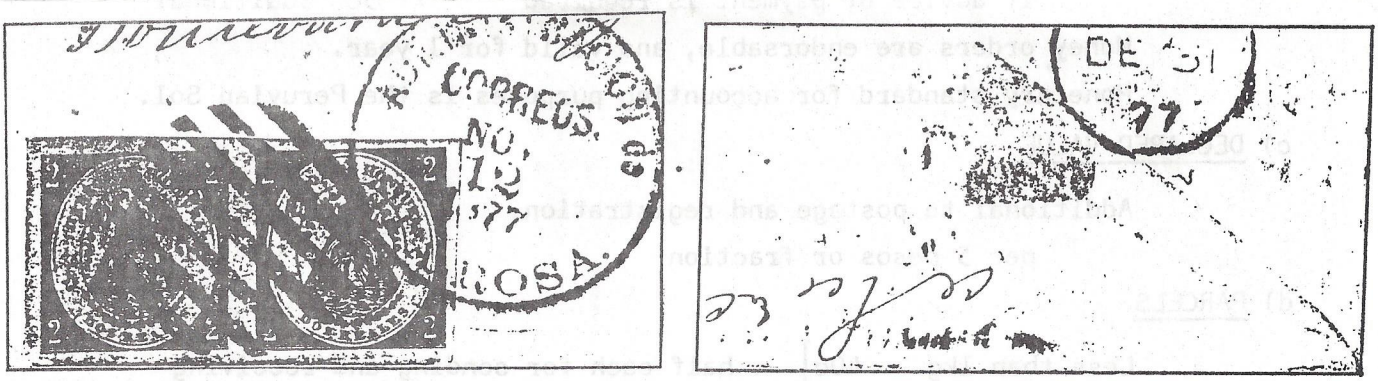
Background

An informative article about these stamps was written by Mr H R Holmes FRPS,L. This paper was read before the Royal Philatelic Society in London on 20 January 1955. His conclusions prompted Stanley Gibbons to delete all but three of the unframed (Tegucigalpa) type surcharges from their catalogue. Strangely this deletion took place twenty five years after the paper was presented!

We agree that the three surcharges now listed by Stanley Gibbons are those most often found genuinely used. However at the time (1980), I protested to their editor, and still do, regarding the elimination of the three framed type (Comayagua) surcharges that conform with the Postal Guide instructions. I have seen a used copy of one of these Scott 6), with a Philatelic Foundation certificate stating that it is genuine.

The framed surcharges were probably the original type, made in Comayagua, and used there for the four month period prior to the transfer of the seat of Government to Tegucigalpa in August, 1877. Since these italic lettered hand-stamps were carved, it is said from the thorn of the local "Jobo" tree, the less intricate design consisting of a single line value (Tegucigalpa type) proved more legible that the wavy-lined framed type. Also given the prevalence of the three values of the unframed type surcharges, it would seem that the fiscal authorities in charge of executing the provisions of the Postal Guide (in regard to surcharges on the first issue), starting about September 1877, decided to release simple one line italic letterd values for general use throughout the country.

The recent acquisition to my collection is shown below. Enlarged x 1.4.



front reverse

The "on piece" provisional is ex-Caspary and has a November 12, 1877 cds from Santa Rosa, a town in western Honduras. On the reverse of the piece is a British transit mark in red dater December 31, 1877.

The rate for a single weight letter was four reales (two 2r surcharges SG 30, Scott 23). This paid postage to Panama where a Honduras postal agent saw it being placed aboard the correct vessel in Colon (then Aspinwall). The usual routing was through Ampala on the Pacific coast. Other more remote possibilities would be via Omoa or Trujillo on the Atlantic.

The ex-Caspary lot contained a similar piece (town of origin unknown) with the same franking and a British 'T' postage due marking. Interestingly this item has a small dealer's or expert's marking on the back "Jean Givibimi". If anyone can tell me who he was I would be most appreciative.

CENTRAL AMERICAN POSTAL & TELEGRAPHIC CONVENTION OF 1889

by CECILE GRUSON

The Central-American "Dieta" elaborated the above Convention, as a consequence of the "General Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Trade" signed in Guatemala on February 16, 1887. The postal Convention was signed in San José, Costa Rica, on January 7, 1889, by representatives of the five Republics. The main features of this Convention were unified rates and conditons within all of Central America:

a) MAIL

Letters, per 15g or fraction	5c
Postcards	2c
Double postcards	4c
Commercial papers & samples, per 250g	5c
Printed matter	free
Registration, in addition to postage	5c
Advice of Receipt	5c

b) MONEY ORDERS

Per 5 pesos or fraction, payable in stamps	10c
if advice of payment is required	5c additional

Money orders are endorsable, and valid for 1 year.

Monetary standard for accounting purposes is the Peruvian Sol.

c) DECLARED VALUE

Additional to postage and registration, per 5 pesos or fraction 10c

d) PARCELS

Less than 1kg	40c	half each for sending and receiving countries, payable by sender/addressee
1 to 3kg	60c	

Compulsory declaration of contents according to UPU rules.

In case of damage to contents, sender may claim an indemnity of 5 pesos.

e) TELEGRAPH SERVICE

Date, address and signature		free
First ten words	in Spanish	25c
	in other languages	37½c
per additional group of 5 words	in Spanish	6¼c
	in other languages	18¾c

I would be interested to hear, via the Editor, whether this Convention was ever ratified and put into force. At least in Guatemala, some of the rates look unfamiliar.